

UNIFIED FIRE SERVICE AREA
Public Hearing Meeting Minutes
6:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Chair Moser
Councilmember Christensen
Councilmember Ferguson
Councilmember Glover
Mayor Painter
Councilmember Perry

Councilmember Bush
Councilmember Stewart
Councilmember Bailey
Mayor Silvestrini
Mayor Johnson
Councilmember Snelgrove

ABSENT:

Councilmember Granato
Chief Petersen

ALSO PRESENT:

District Administrator Ifo Pili
AC Andrus
Michelle Roper
Rachel Anderson

AC Ziolkowski
Cynthia Young
CFO Hill
DOC Easton

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Chair Coralee Moser presided

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Called to Order

Chair Moser called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 pm. Quorum present.

Presentation- UFSA Tax Increase Proposal

Assistant Chief Ziolkowski and District Administrator Ifo Pili presented the Tax Increase Proposal powerpoint. There were no questions on the presentation from Board members.

Public Comments

T. Johnson-Taylorsville: When the stations are built, are all necessary issues (ex: seismic) considered? It is important to have an open bid process.

Orleen Novasio-Taylorsville: Can't understand why stations are so much, they are way overboard. They don't have to be that nice. Also, she sees the crews at the grocery, why do they all have to go? We can't keep giving; we don't have enough to give.

Bill Gray-Magna: There are an increasing number of people on fixed incomes who can't keep absorbing the ever increasing costs. Inflation on homes, etc., and the monies from those increases ought to help with our increased needs.

Steve Roper-Millcreek: Fixed Income. Wants government to be responsible and not charge individuals out of their homes. It hurts with all these increases. The valley keeps growing, where is that money going?

Cory Minson-Millcreek: Concern: responsibility, new building in valley should supply money we need. Too much government, he is tired of taking it in the pocketbook.

Joseph Stobbe-Millcreek: Owns 2 homes; his concern was his cabin in Porter Fork. The gate is locked, no hydrants, no cell service, no road access for engines. Why is he paying? He was told that the FD will not help in the canyon if there ever was a fire. No promise of fire protection, so why pay the increase? Interested in whether the FD has ever responded in the canyon at all.

Dave Updyke-Millcreek: Millcreek and Sandy properties, just echoing what has already been said. Property taxes and valley growth should be covering this.

Thomas Wall (Tommy)-Millcreek: When he built his home, he had to pay for the hydrant. I did not see a breakdown of the 40M contract and I believe the Schedule of repairs can be adjusted. On a fixed income, taxes are up on his property. We sent FF to California, who pays for that?

Darlene Chytraus-Millcreek: All I do is get taxed, where does it stop? Retired and forcing me to move out of my house- I don't want to be on welfare- the UFA needs to cut back on fancy fire stations and administration. I feel strongly about that.

Bill Hogan-BCC: FD can't even get to most the homes and we are being charged. On a fixed income. I have to live within my means, but the government doesn't know how to do that. BCC is subsidizing other areas in the valley. Why are we being charged for service we can't even get?

Justin Rosenkrantz-Riverton: Concerned that the elaborate stations are just the tip of the iceberg. It appears that UFA isn't managing our tax money efficiently and effectively and stations are better than his home. Property taxes increase with inflation, which should pay for services.

Mat Downing-Eagle Mtn: CPA, data does not line up.

John Pattersen-Herriman: Thanks for no increase in last 8 yrs. Grateful for beautiful station, it is a credit to the community, glad the money was spent. Thinks increase is responsible and reasonable.

Jeff Johnson-Millcreek: What are impact fees? Some expenditures need more explanation. We are all experiencing increases in living. Believes there are areas to cut costs. Paid more in taxes than he is living on. Seems like mismanagement of the budget and UFA has a responsibility.

Daphne and Steven Schofield-Magna: This tax will be more than her husband's disability pay; they only have \$3.00 left at the end of the month. She is 66 and had to get a job as a dishwasher and is on her feet all day. Both she and her husband will have to work the rest of their lives, and every year taxes are raised. They won't make it if this passes, this is their 1st home.

Don't do this.

Rick Martinez-Millcreek: Very frustrated since we all know how wasteful and inefficient government is. There is a lot of waste that can be cut and save the public money rather than raise taxes.

Doug Wright: Data shows that since UFA has been formed, costs have increased. Problem: buildings are grossly lavish. The bill the UFA sends to the cities increases 6% each year and the cities anticipate that increase. What is happening with Jensen and Scott?

Pat Thomas: Downsized to Sandy from Millcreek. Agrees there is Federal waste. My son holds another job in addition to WL FF. With all the growth, more stations are needed- she supports the \$24.00. Time up.

Inga Bolt-Millcreek: Appreciate FF, but station 106 is an eyesore. The upkeep is horrible and the community does not appreciate that- the FF can take care of that. Thinks buildings are fine, administrators overpaid, FF underpaid.

Trent Homer-Herriman: Taxes inevitable, could there be more of an incremental increase rather than one large one? Charged for ambulance ride, where does that money go?

Motion to close public hearing

Councilmember Glover made a motion to close meeting

Councilmember Bush seconded and all voted in favor

The following dialogue is in response to questions that arose during the public hearing:

Questions with regards to station design, construction, and size: UFA recognizes that in the last 5-10 years, many stations that were built were oversized and opulent. Under Chief Petersen's administration, they are looking into fine tuning station design and making adjustments. Station 117 was designed as a dual station for housing two crews instead of having a third station- it was overbuilt and is likely the last of its kind. This administration is looking at stations that are user friendly, but fit into the community at the right cost.

Why are full crews at the Grocery? Crews go to the grocery store together in order to respond without having to return to the station, always ready!

Porter Fork canyon is inaccessible to apparatus so why pay? Some canyon properties have a knox box and Chief Ziolkowski will work on getting one or checking that there is one on that gate in that canyon. Also addressed Big Cottonwood Canyon (BCC) response access issues, same with Lambs Canyon. Chief Ziolkowski will work with fire prevention bureau on access issues. Big Cottonwood Canyon fire; that fire is continually under review, yes, it was an access issue. However, UFA is committed to having firefighters in BCC who can get to the public quicker. With the two ski lodges there, individuals have quicker access for medical emergencies and 70-80% of our responses are medical.

California Fires: Who pays? Happy to report, the taxpayer is not paying for the response. Surely some wear and tear on the equipment, but from here and back, their commute is covered by California, as well as our costs to backfill the positions left vacant.

Cutting back on administration: Chief Petersen made an immediate reduction in the number of chiefs and is continually working on ways to cut expenses.

UFA managing money effectively? UFA went from a 3 page financial document to 130 pages in order to be more transparent. This document is a detailed drill down on each of the divisions showing where the money is being spent. 80% of the 40M goes to firefighters. This document is public information and on the UFA website.

UFA now has a new strategic plan with goals and outcomes. There are action items, and if the division directors don't achieve expected outcomes, their budget requests don't get funded.

3-Person vs 4-person crew: OSHA has a 2 in 2 out rule, this is not new. In a fire, more is done with the 4th person on the engine.

Why so many responding to a traffic accident? This is driven by dispatch and the type of response-911 calls come into dispatch and depending on the description of the emergency, they determine who to call and how many. UFA is looking into getting quicker turnaround times and getting the crews back into service sooner.

Apologize for the lawn at Station 106, Chief Ziolkowski will make a call tomorrow and have the crew take care of it.

Where does the ambulance bill money go? This is additional revenue that comes to the fire department and is allowed by the State Bureau of Emergency Medical Service. The taxes you pay are for our emergency services (fire, medical, hazardous materials, etc.). This money is revenue that offsets future tax increases and operating costs. Patients can refuse transport and if we don't transport, there is no bill, but if they do take you to the hospital, then the fees are based on whether it is a basic life support or advanced life support transport and mileage.

What about future expected costs for equipment? It is captured now and broken down with dollar amounts identified for future periods. It's not just if the apparatus will start and transport the crew to the emergency, it's also that the crew fighting a fire can rely on the equipment to pump the water- they are relying on it for their lives, as well as the patients needing emergency crews to show up for theirs.

Member fees: Four members; Alta, Cottonwood Heights, UFSA, Holladay. UFA charges each member a member fee. This fee goes up each year and each member determines how they will pay/collect that fee.

Property tax from an administrator standpoint is stable and UFSA is guaranteed a certain amount. Each taxing entity is only guaranteed the amount of revenue they received the previous year. We only get new growth monies; we do not get additional funds from property reappraisals.

Question regarding former administration: Tracking on all audit suggestions is on our website. State Attorney General is still investigating and following up. This is no longer in our hands. The UFSA and UFA have committed to a proactive stance to recover any public monies, if are able to do so.

Motion to adjourn public hearing

Councilmember Stewart made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Councilmember Ferguson seconded and all voted in favor.